

WRITING EFFECTIVE SUMMARIES

A. Identify!

You can identify what you are summarizing in a variety of ways. The following are okay, better, and best ways to identify what it is you are summarizing.

OK: The book
The film
The article

BETTER: *Painless Public Speaking*
Forrest Gump
"Going Under the Light"

BEST: *Painless Public Speaking* by Sharon Bower
The movie, *Forrest Gump*
"Going Under the Light" from *Newsweek*, October 2, 1995

B. Select a Verb!

acknowledges	evaluates
adds	explains*
advises	explores
answers	expresses
asks	features
asserts	furnishes
assures	gives
blames	identifies
captures	illustrates
clarifies	invites
classifies	judget
compares*	lists*
confirms	misjudges
confronts	names
confuses	offends
contrasts	praises
considers	predicts
critiques	presents*
demonstrates	proposes
defends	provides
defines*	recommends
denounces	shows*
depicts	simplifies
describes*	solves
discourages	suggests
encourages	supports
endorsees	teaches
entertains	tells*
entices	traces

C. Finish Your Thought!

The final part of the topic sentence is easy if you just ask yourself:

- *What is the big idea?*
- *What is the big concept?*
- *What is the main idea of the item that I am summarizing?*

Keep in mind that this is just your topic sentence and that you will be adding all of the facts in the body of your summary paragraph.

Step Up to Writing by Maureen Auman
<http://www.sopriswest.com>

A + B + C = TOPIC SENTENCE

Painless Public Speaking by Sharon Bower provides a number of practical hints for people who are afraid of speaking in front of a group.

BODY: Create a fact outline. Then add those facts to your paragraph in sentence form.

HELPFUL HINTS: Use transitions only if they help. Summaries do not need a formal conclusion. If you force a conclusion, it might sound awkward. Also formal conclusions include opinions - you do not want an opinion in a summary.

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